



G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

August 31, 2001

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Crime
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

Subject: Responses of Federal Agencies and Airports We Surveyed About Access Security Improvements

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter responds to the Subcommittee's December 2000 request that we determine what security improvements were implemented by federal agencies and airports as a result of the testimony we presented to the Subcommittee in May 2000 regarding security breaches at selected agencies and airports.¹

Our May 25, 2000, testimony presented our findings with respect to the Subcommittee's request that we investigate the potential security risk posed by the use of stolen or counterfeit law enforcement badges and credentials. The concern was that such badges and credentials, which are readily available for purchase on the Internet and from other public sources, could be used by criminals, terrorists, and foreign intelligence agents to gain access to secure government buildings and airports.

To address these concerns, Office of Special Investigations agents conducted an undercover operation in April and May 2000 to gain entry into 19 federal sites and 2 commercial airports in the Washington, D.C., area and in Orlando, Florida.² At each site, the agents carried bogus badges and credentials, declared themselves as armed law enforcement officers, and gained entry without submitting to magnetometer and x-ray screenings. Our agents were 100-percent successful in penetrating the 21 targeted sites, and at no time were their bogus credentials or badges challenged by anyone. Before the May 2000 hearing, we briefed agency officials on how we gained entry to their facilities.

¹ *Security: Breaches at Federal Agencies and Airports* (GAO/T-OSI-00-10, May 25, 2000).

² The Central Intelligence Agency; Federal Aviation Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Immigration and Naturalization Service; Library of Congress; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; National Archives and Records Administration; and the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, State, and Transportation; Orlando Airport; Ronald Reagan National Airport; and the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building in Orlando, FL.

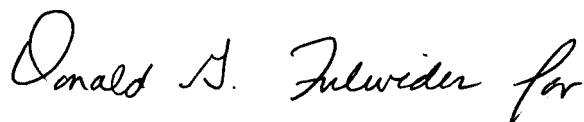
We conducted our work to obtain follow-up information from January through August 2001. We contacted 20 sites that we successfully penetrated in 2000³ to determine what actions, if any, each agency has taken. In addition, we surveyed 23 other major federal agencies about any security improvements they may have implemented as a result of the hearing. We provided a copy of our testimony to the security office of each agency and airport and asked that they submit written responses to us.

All 43 of the agencies and airports we queried responded; many stated that they had either started or completed a security assessment of existing security policies and procedures. Thirty-seven agencies—19 were part of our previous work and 18 were not—reported specific policy and/or procedural changes that they had taken to enhance access security. Four agencies that were not part of our previous work said they made no changes in response to our testimony because their existing security procedures were adequate. The remaining two respondents did not specify whether or not they made security improvements. The enclosure lists the 43 agencies we surveyed and shows which agencies responded that they took action to improve their access security, which agencies responded that they took no action, and which agencies' responses were nonspecific.

Many of the 37 agencies that reported specific changes responded that only those armed law enforcement officers on official business may enter their facilities. Those not on official business must first surrender their weapons for secure storage and are treated as visitors, who are screened by magnetometers and x-ray machines. Some agencies reported that they now require law enforcement officers on official business to be escorted at all times. Two agencies said they are developing a digital credential, "smart card," system that would electronically verify a law enforcement officer's identity. We did not verify whether the security enhancements reported by the agencies actually occurred.

We are sending copies of this letter to interested congressional committees and the heads of each agency and airport we surveyed. We will also make copies available to others on request. The letter will also be available at www.gao.gov. If you have any questions about this investigation, please call me at (202) 512-7455 or Assistant Director Patrick Sullivan at (202) 512-6722. Senior Special Agent Kenneth Feng, Senior Analyst Shelia James, and Deputy Assistant General Counsel Margaret Armen made significant contributions to this inquiry and letter.

Sincerely yours,



Robert H. Hast
Managing Director
Office of Special Investigations

³ We did not follow up with the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building in Orlando, FL; however, we contacted the U.S. Marshals Service and the General Services Administration, which are responsible for the security of judicial facilities and federal buildings, respectively.

**Responses From the
43 Agencies and Airports Surveyed**

| Agency/Airport | Action taken | No action taken | Nonspecific response |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Central Intelligence Agency ^a | | | x |
| Defense Intelligence Agency | x | | |
| Department of Agriculture | x | | |
| Department of Commerce | x | | |
| Department of Defense | x | | |
| Department of Education | x | | |
| Department of Energy | x | | |
| Department of Health and Human Services | x | | |
| Department of Housing and Urban Development | x | | |
| Department of the Interior | x | | |
| Department of Justice | x | | |
| Department of Labor | x | | |
| Department of State | x | | |
| Department of Transportation | x | | |
| Department of the Treasury | x | | |
| Department of Veterans Affairs | x | | |
| Drug Enforcement Administration | x | | |
| Federal Aviation Administration | x | | |
| Federal Bureau of Investigation | x | | |
| Federal Emergency Management Agency | x | | |
| Food and Drug Administration | x | | |
| General Services Administration | x | | |
| Government Printing Office | | x | |
| Holocaust Memorial Museum | x | | |
| Immigration and Naturalization Service | x | | |
| Internal Revenue Service | x | | |
| Library of Congress | x | | |
| National Aeronautics and Space Administration | x | | |
| National Archives and Records Administration | x | | |
| National Security Agency | | x | |
| National Science Foundation | x | | |
| Nuclear Regulatory Commission | x | | |
| Orlando Airport | x | | |
| Ronald Reagan National Airport | x | | |
| Smithsonian Institution | x | | |
| Social Security Administration | x | | |
| The Supreme Court of the United States ^b | | | x |
| U.S. Agency for International Development | x | | |
| U.S. Capitol Police | x | | |
| U.S. Customs Service | x | | |
| U.S. Marshals Service | x | | |
| U.S. Postal Service | | x | |
| U.S. Secret Service | | x | |

^a Responded to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

^b Referred the information request to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

(600916)